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ABSTRACT

It is proposed that the training of teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL) who anticipate long careers in the field should include a program management training component in addition to traditional pedagogical components. In this approach, management of an ESL program is conceptualized as human resource management, including physical resources such as classrooms and materials, and the human resources of students, faculty, and administrative staff. Focus of the current discussion is on the human resources aspect of program administration, and on the interrelationships between decision-making and resource management. Basic considerations in student resource management examined here include recruitment, admissions, orientation/advising, and alumni relations. Faculty development considerations include structuring of staffing needs, matching hiring decisions with organizational needs, and provision of ongoing professional development opportunities. Issues in administrative resource development include promotion of technical, human, and conceptual skills in administrative staff at all levels. (MSE)

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# Human Resources Development in the Management of English Language Programs: An Introduction for Teachers

Martha C. Pennington

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# HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT IN THE MANAGEMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROGRAMS: AN INTRODUCTION FOR TEACHERS

MARTHA C PENNINGTON

## Abstract

In place of a traditional focus on educational and curricular concerns, language program management is described in terms of the development of human resources in the categories of students, faculty, and administration. Such an orientation is provided as an introduction to program management for language teachers who have long-term career aspirations in ESL/ELT and whose preparation did not include coursework related to program management or administration.

## Introduction

As it is usually conceptualized, language program development or management centers on curricular matters such as teaching, materials, and testing. Indeed, many authors in the ESL or ELT fields virtually equate the terms "language program" and "language curriculum." For this reason, most language teacher preparation programs, if they offer any coursework at all in program development or management, tend to focus such courses on curriculum design. However, the view of language programs as identical to their curricula is not the only perspective from which the organization and management of language education can be viewed. While the concerns associated with curriculum are naturally central to any language teaching enterprise, these concerns are not in fact all there is to designing and running a language program.

It is possible to view a language program from a very different angle, one which is only peripherally related to the perspective that focuses on curricular concerns. From this new perspective, the focus moves away from strictly educational matters and towards administrative matters. As confirmed by research on the administration of ESL programs (e.g., Matthies, 1983; Pennington, 1991; Pennington & Xiao, 1990; Reasor, 1980), the educational concerns that are naturally the focus of teacher preparation in language teaching are in fact rather

peripheral to language program management. It would seem, therefore, that anyone who has long-term career aspirations in the ESL/ELT field could benefit by knowing something about language program development from the administrative side.

The present paper offers an introduction to language program management that is intended to supplement the information provided in the typical ESL/ELT teacher preparation course. From the administrative point of view, a language program can be conceptualized in terms of the development and management of resources. The resources of a language program comprise both physical resources such as classrooms and materials and the human resources (Hershey & Blanchard, 1977) of students, faculty, and administrative staff. The focus of the present paper is on language program management as development of its human resources of students, faculty, and administration. In what follows, language program resources are described as a set of interlocking decision-areas, and then the discussion turns to resource development in each of the three categories of students, faculty, and administration.

## The Interlocking Nature of Program Resources and Decisions

It is an axiom of program administration that all aspects of the structure and functioning of any educational program are interrelated. Hence, any decision made about the design or development of the resources of a language program in one area will affect and be affected by the choices made in other areas. To take a concrete example of the interlocking nature of programmatic decisions: The number of students in an educational program, especially in the case of a self-supporting unit, affects and is affected by the structure and decisions in several other areas, as illustrated in Figure 1.

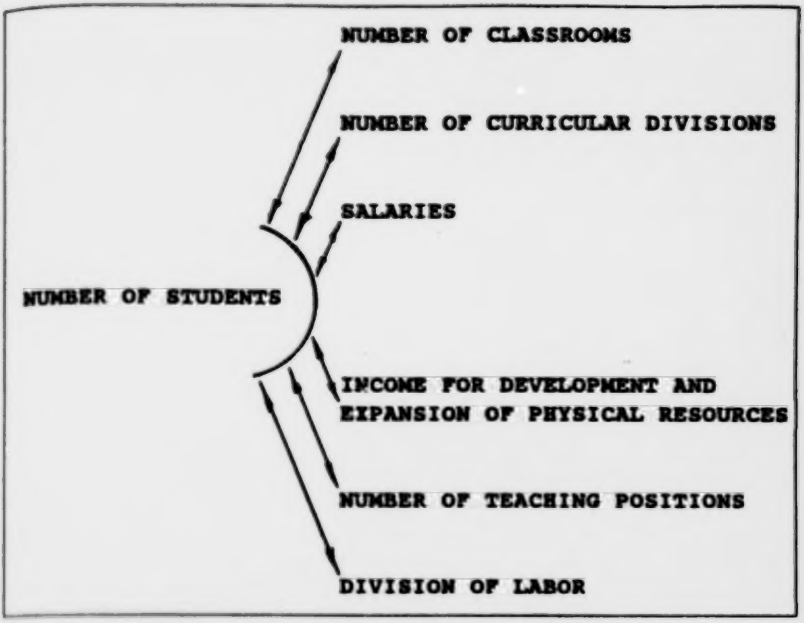


Figure 1. Relationship of Enrolment to Other Program Features

As Figure 1 is intended to illustrate, increasing enrolment projects to an increasing number of classrooms. On the other hand, a limited amount of space may restrict the possibilities for increasing enrolment. The number of curricular divisions or levels possible in a program is directly related to the size of enrolment. For example, if an average class size of 30-35 is desired, then a regular average enrolment of about 200 students is required to support six grade levels or proficiency levels (e.g., Beginner, High Beginner, Intermediate, High Intermediate, Advanced, High Advanced) on a continuing basis. With regular enrolment of 600 students, three sections of 30-35 students are possible at each of six proficiency levels (e.g., Beginner 1, Beginner 2, Beginner 3; Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, Intermediate 3; Advanced 1, Advanced 2, Advanced 3).

Larger enrolments, in the hundreds or thousands, support larger financial outlays for salaries and provide income for development of the physical resources of the program to improve its quality and to expand its services to a wider student audience. These larger expenditures are expected, then, to result in large

enrolments. However, there is a sort of "vicious cycle" here, in that if the program is to remain financially sound, these larger expenditures must continue to be supported by large enrolments.

In addition, there is a close relationship between the number of teaching positions and the number of students enrolled or projected to be enrolled in the program. By the same token, if the faculty is large, then enrolment needs to be sustained at a current high level or increased to avoid position cuts. Regarding the division of labor, as a program grows--that is, as the number of students and teachers increases--there is the potential for, and the need for, more non-teaching staff. New positions intermediate between the program director and other staff positions may be created. These may include positions intermediate between the director and the instructors (e.g., a faculty supervisor or curriculum coordinator); between the director and the other administrative staff (e.g., an assistant or associate director); or between the director and the students (e.g., a student adviser or student services coordinator).

If, on the other hand, a program shrinks, the division of labor will have to shift. As often happens in a situation of diminishing enrolments and decreasing income, some staff members may suddenly need to spend a great deal of time promoting the program and recruiting students, or lobbying with a higher authority to justify the continued existence of the language program. Under these conditions, the program staff will eventually have to be cut back to a smaller number of hierarchical divisions, job categories, and individual positions.

As this illustration shows, any effort at language program development, whether starting a program from scratch or developing an already existing program, requires a comprehensive and unified view of the program as a whole, and how the conditions in each resource area affect and are affected by every other resource area. As this illustration also shows, program design must be adaptable and responsive to changing conditions throughout the entire system of interlocking decisions.

## Student Development

In projecting or developing the student resource area of the language program, four basic considerations are necessary. (For more detailed discussion and additional considerations, see Middlebrook, 1991.) These are illustrated in Figure 2.

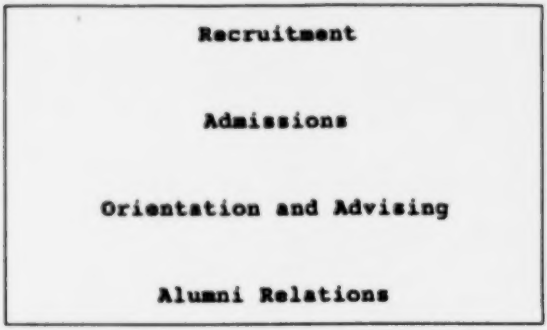


Figure 2. Considerations in Student Services

## Recruitment

The first and most essential consideration in the area of students is to make sure that there are any, and that their numbers are sufficient to support the program's staff and basic operating expenses. In some cases, this will mean recruitment of students via direct mail or other types of promotional campaign. (See Jenks, 1991, for detailed discussion of promotional materials.) Recruitment efforts should attempt to ensure that the needs and interests of the students who are recruited will be a good match for the type of instruction and services to be provided by the language program. A critical issue in the recruitment area is therefore whether the nature of the program is honestly represented by all its agents and in all its publications, such as brochures, and whether it is promoted by ethical means.

## Admissions

It is essential for admissions criteria to be well-articulated and consistent, for ethical reasons and for the practical reason of ensuring that students who are admitted will end up actually enrolling and staying in the program. The admissions criteria and decisions should reflect the purposes and goals of the language program and, if relevant, the larger institution in which it is housed. Thus, in the admissions area, we want to ensure that the evaluation of students' credentials is thorough and accurate, and that admission is based on a mutual compatibility between the applicant and the program.

## Orientation and Advising

When a student arrives in the language program, a comprehensive academic and social orientation should be provided to get each individual off to a good start and to head off problems that might arise later on. This initial orientation can include the elements shown in Figure 3.

(1) introduction of program staff, their credentials and achievements;
(2) the program philosophy, curriculum and teaching methods, and how these may differ from other programs;
(3) the structure of the program in terms of proficiency groupings, and the procedures for testing, placement, and promotion;
(4) the expected results for students who apply themselves diligently to study;
(5) other areas of information representing commonly asked questions;
(6) open question and answer period;
(7) open or structured social activity.

Figure 3. Components of Student Orientation

Such an orientation has at least five different functions. First, it helps to clarify the nature of the program and to provide other kinds of necessary or useful information, thereby heading off questions later on. Second, it is a kind of indoctrination which attempts to obtain the student's commitment to the values and purposes of the program. Third, the orientation helps to direct student behavior by projecting a target and a goal for the student to try to achieve. Fourth, it is a kind of pep-talk to motivate incoming students to achieve those goals. And fifth, it provides a social experience to get together with other students and with program staff. In short, the good orientation informs, commits, directs, motivates, and integrates the new student.

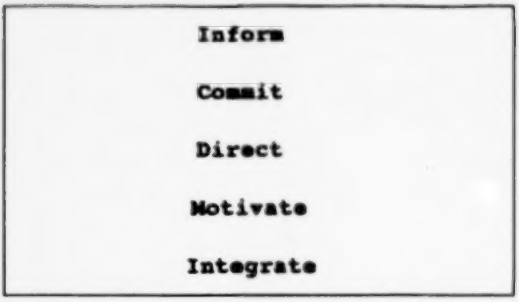


Figure 4. Purposes of Student Orientation

The student orientation can be coupled with an advising system which provides ongoing assistance to students in their academic program and with a social organization which provides extracurricular activities for students and staff. This may be a social committee that includes staff and student members, or it could be a special assignment for an administrative staff member. Either way, the social structure of the program is an integral part of its functioning and of the satisfaction of the students and the staff. It is therefore well worth the investment required to give it attention and nurturing.

### Alumni Relations

After students leave the program, it can be of value to continue to maintain contact with them through a network of alumni. These alumni can provide useful information and may also assist in promotion and recruitment for the program, on a formal or an informal basis. To maintain contact, an alumni newsletter might be developed and disseminated to students after they leave the program. The program can maintain regular contact with alumni to request news for the newsletter, as well as to conduct follow-up surveys on the value of the instruction received in the language program and the ways that it might be improved to meet the real-life needs of its current and future students.

## Faculty Development

The faculty is the most important asset of any educational enterprise because it has the most direct impact on its clientele, the students, and on the reputation of the program outside its home department or institution. Moreover, the nature of the faculty provides the program with a continuous and distinctive core set of values, and a unique character that attracts students and prestige, which will in turn reflect back on the students and on the administration. Good faculty are central to this cumulative process of building prestige, which continues to attract favorable attention to the program and so also attracts high-quality students, faculty, and other staff members. Accordingly, faculty development should be a primary concern of every program administrator.

Faculty development begins with a conception of the program as a whole and how the faculty structure will fit into the network of interlocking program components as the language program is being designed. The first step in structuring a faculty is therefore the determination of staffing needs, both immediate and long-range. This determination takes place before any faculty members are hired and again every time a new position opens up. Staffing needs change over time, depending on the number and the character of the students enrolled and according to the interests and strengths of those who have already been hired. Faculty positions may therefore change in nature or in number as a response to changing characteristics of the student body and of the faculty as a whole.

In making faculty hiring decisions, it is important to try to match faculty orientation not only to the philosophy and curricular structure of the program, but also to the interests and needs of the students. At the same time, the structure and characteristics of a program should be able to accommodate the differing approaches and interests of individual teachers. The faculty should in fact be consciously structured, both at the outset when a program is first designed and later in the life of a program when new positions are added or faculty members replaced, to incorporate a measure of diversity in teacher characteristics. A degree of heterogeneity in faculty characteristics ensures administrative flexibility to meet the generally unpredictable and fluctuating needs of the student body. Planned diversity within the teaching faculty provides the program with a wide array of internally generated resources for the growth and development of the program as a whole as well as for the individuals who work together on the faculty and who serve as resources for each other.

Diversity can be achieved by structuring the faculty to include a balance of types of positions. Inclusion of some part-time or teaching assistant positions allows for administrative flexibility in scheduling and class organization. At the same time, a core of experienced full-time professionals is desirable in most situations, since these teachers provide for program continuity, stability and progressive development and improvement of the curriculum and operations. A balance of experienced and new teachers ensures continuing input of fresh ideas and maintenance of faculty enthusiasm.

Once the faculty has been organized, the continuing success of a program is dependent on long-range developmental aims. From the administrative perspective, development means innovation and growth, and a continual evolution of the organization in a certain direction according to a vision of its potential and how it can be realized. From the faculty perspective, development means growing and evolving as a professional in the field. In the ideal case, personal goals develop in parallel to the goals of the organization. Hence, the management of faculty resources in a language program should be tied to a professional development plan which encourages individuals to further the goals of the organization through their own professional expansion or improvement. In such a system, motivation derives quite naturally from explicit opportunities for professional growth.

As part of the ongoing professional development of faculty competence, inservice and continuing education opportunities of many different types can be made available to teachers. Any kind of professional activity, whether engaged in by the faculty as individuals or as a group, should be encouraged through incentives such as release time or other types of allowances and incentives, including raises and promotions. For as faculty members increase their status and mature professionally, so does the program in which they work. Moreover, faculty members who are benefitting professionally from association with a program gain in loyalty and job satisfaction and are likely to maintain a high level of productivity throughout their careers. In contrast, those who do not grow and change in their jobs become bored, frustrated and dissatisfied, often remarking that they suffer from "burnout". If the ultimate aim is to spark enrolments and fire up students, a burned out teacher is bound to have a disappointing performance.

Professional development opportunities may involve teachers in outside activities such as conference attendance or continuing education courses, or may draw on the resources of the program and its internal needs. For example, after-class workshop activities can be instituted by an administrator or teacher based on case studies, role-play or problem-solving activities built around typical classroom

situations which faculty members are encountering and which are the source of stress or are of particular interest to them. It is also advantageous to involve faculty members in projects aimed at external promotion or improvement of non-teaching aspects of the program. For example, a faculty committee might oversee design and implementation of a conversation partners program; an individual faculty member might serve on a school-wide committee that advises on student services in all units; another faculty member might help disseminate information about the program to potential students. In this way, faculty members, while experimenting with new job tasks, come to have a personal interest in the welfare of the program and a stake in its continued existence.

**Administrative Development**

In a well-known article, Katz (1974) emphasizes the need for three different skills in effective administration. Katz's definitions of the three types of skill are given in Figure 5.

**Technical skill**: An understanding of, and proficiency in, a specific kind of activity, particularly one involving methods, processes, procedures, or techniques.
**Human skill**: Ability to work effectively as a group member and to build cooperative effort within the team he/she leads.
**Conceptual skill**: The ability to see the enterprise as a whole, including recognizing how the various functions of the organization depend on one another and how changes in any one part affect all the others and extending to visualizing the relationship of the organization to the entire field, the community, and to political, social and economic forces.

Figure 5. The Skills of Effective Administration (Katz, 1974)

Katz's 3-skill model can be applied to ESL/ELT administration, as has been done in Figure 6a-c (adapted from Pennington, 1985).

- English language (phonology, grammar, morphology, pragmatics)
- Teaching (approaches, methods, techniques)
- Educational materials (evaluation, adaptation, development)
- Audiovisual equipment (operation, uses)
- Curriculum design
- Testing and placement
- Immigration matters
- Personnel (hiring, training, evaluation of faculty and office staff, legal issues)
- Finances (budgeting, accounting)
- Administrative writing (memos, reports, contracts grants, promotional literature)
- Recordkeeping systems
- Computer skills

Figure 6a. Technical Skill in the ESL Context

- Presentations (arousing and sustaining interest)
- Training sessions (motivating staff involvement)
- Meetings (expressing ideas clearly, listening skillfully; interacting successfully as leader AND group member)
- Giving individual counsel and feedback (asking open-ended questions, ensuring mutual understanding, giving meaningful advice)
- Curriculum development and implementation (negotiating with faculty and students as a group and as individuals)
- Handling complaints and criticisms (dealing tactfully and locally with problems)
- Making changes (preparing for change by disseminating information and practicing persuasion and negotiation)
- Keeping morale high (making staff members feel appreciated)

Figure 6b. Human Skill in the ESL Context

- Needs analysis
- Promotion and marketing
- Management (time, resources)
- Long-term and short-term planning (fiscal resources, human resources, strategic directions)
- Goal-setting and plans for achieving goals
- Development of proposals (grants, contracts, procurements)
- Staffing (hiring and organizing)
- Evaluation (staff, curriculum, other program aspects)

Figure 6c. Conceptual Skill in the ESL Context

Technical skill is most important at lower levels of ESL/ELT administration (e.g., administrative assistant), while conceptual skill is most essential at higher levels (e.g., program director or department chair). Human skill is required at every level, including mid-level positions such as faculty supervisor or academic coordinator. The ESL/ELT administrator with poor human skill is fighting an uphill battle with a group of teachers, whose orientation is first and foremost to communication and interaction with other people. The same can be said of the director who cuts corners in time management by not interacting with staff, putting paperwork before "peoplework."

Fox (1991) confirms the relative unimportance for success as an ESL/ELT program director of technical skills such as record-keeping, as compared to human skills such as team-building and conceptual skills such as the ability to develop a "vision" of where the program is headed. However, the technical skills that directly relate to producing and handling income--such as budgeting and program promotion--may be absolutely essential in cases where programs must operate in the black with no external funding, subsidies, or guaranteed enrolments. Moreover, the program director without an ESL/ELT background or degree sometimes has a credibility problem with teachers that can interfere with his/her effectiveness. Being technically skilled in ESL/ELT methods and materials can gain the teachers' respect and hence their cooperation in program affairs.

Since very few with an ESL/ELT background have any training in administration and since it is doubtful whether one person could be equally strong in all of these skill areas, the administration of a language program can profitably be divided among individuals with complementary skills. An administrative team structure would seem to be a realistic alternative to one person trying to do it all. Another option is to provide special training for teachers to assume some administrative responsibilities. Most likely, this training would have to come from outside the language program itself, perhaps through coursework in management or educational administration. A third option is an on-site administrative practicum or apprenticeship (Pennington, 1985). In the administrative practicum or apprenticeship, a promising individual works closely with a seasoned administrator to "learn the ropes" of program administration in action. Such an apprenticeship is a way to build administrative skills through practical experience and to learn from mistakes in a context where the results of those mistakes would not be devastating to the program.

Just as faculty members should be continually renewing themselves and expanding their competencies, so should administrators be involved in professional development. My research (Pennington, 1991) suggests that ESL/ELT program directors could benefit from supplementary coursework in management practices, such as: accounting, promotion and recruitment, program planning and organization, public relations, negotiation, motivation, and other personnel concerns. A variety of training and "hands-on" experiences can strengthen and diversify the preparation of ESL/ELT administrators, providing them with the balance of educational and management skills required for their unique and demanding jobs.

## Conclusion

Looking beyond issues of curriculum per se, the management of an English language program can usefully be conceptualized in terms of resources, both physical and human, and how those resources are developed. From this perspective, the basic objectives in language program development are to maximize the quality of all resources and to optimize their functioning. Directions for development of a language program, and priorities for change and growth, will therefore be based on a consideration of how changes in one resource area can help to improve the quality and functioning of other program resources. The ultimate goal then becomes one of developing resources, especially, the people in the organization--the students, the faculty, and the administration--towards ever greater realization of their potential.

**Acknowledgement**

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